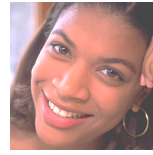




CFSA Fact Sheet



Ten Tips for Keeping Children Safe

- 1 Never shake a baby.** Vigorously shaking a baby by the arms, legs, chest, or shoulders can cause brain damage or blindness. These injuries are called “shaken baby syndrome.” An estimated 50,000 cases occur in the U.S. each year, and one in four shaken babies dies from this abuse.



- 2 Put healthy babies down to sleep on their backs.** Medical experts believe putting healthy babies down to sleep on their backs may reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Ask your doctor about the best sleep position for your baby.

- 3 Be careful who cares for your child.** Sadly, unrelated caretakers, including immature babysitters or a parent's boyfriend or girlfriend, harm too many children. Choose experienced, responsible caregivers who like children. Discuss your child's needs, habits, and schedule. Communicate your rules and preferred methods of discipline. Make sure the caretaker knows what to do in an emergency, and check in frequently to monitor your child's well being.



- 4 Don't leave children home alone until they can be responsible.** Infants and young children need full-time care and supervision. With older kids, it's a matter of maturity and preparation. Can your child follow rules (stay inside, no cooking, don't open the door to strangers)? Have you role played what to do in case of fire, injury, or other emergency? Is there a safe place to go (such as next door), if necessary? Does your child know how to contact you? A rebellious teen may need more supervision than a responsible 11-year-old. Use your own good judgment. Prepare your child, start with short periods alone, and monitor results.



- 5 Never leave children alone in a car.** In summer, a closed car can quickly heat up to dangerous levels. In winter, a closed car left running can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning. Children alone in cars are also easy targets for car jackers or child snatchers.

- 6 Know how to spot a depressed child.** Nearly 2,000 U.S. youngsters, ages 10 to 19, committed suicide in 2000. Depression is often a factor. Watch for:
- Persistent sadness and/or irritability.
 - Low self-esteem or feelings of worthlessness.
 - Increase or decrease in activity, eating, or sleeping.

- Loss of interest in favorite activities.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Anger and rage.
- Pains that seem to have no cause.
- Preoccupation with death or suicide.

If your child or teen has two or more of these symptoms, ask your doctor to refer you to a mental health professional.

7 **Learn about child development.**



Children go through many phases as they grow. Most parents find toddlers and teens present special challenges. Learning what you can reasonably expect from children at each stage makes parenting easier. Visit your local library, bookstore, or the Internet for helpful information about child development.

8 Use discipline to teach. No one is born with good judgment or self-control. Over many years, children develop these skills through training and guidance

from caring adults. Discipline is an important teaching tool. It involves setting limits in keeping with the child's age, being consistent, and linking lapses in behavior to consequences: time out, loss of privileges, restitution, extra chores. For sound advice, seek out the many books available on effective discipline of children and teens.

9 **Overwhelmed? Ask for help!**

Tragically, child abuse often results when adult anger and frustration spin out of control. Every parent feels overwhelmed at times. When it happens to you, ask for help! Relatives, friends, religious advisors, and other professionals will understand.

10 Report child abuse and neglect. In the District, call (202) 671-SAFE—(202) 671-7233—24 hours a day. You won't have to give your name. You will help a child. n